

Marine Safety Newsletter

US Coast Guard Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Directorate

Tsunamis Are Possible Along U.S. East Coast

A team of scientists investigating whether possible cracks along the outer continental shelf off the mid-Atlantic coast might lead to a tsunami, has discovered that the entire area is charged with gas.

Based on preliminary results from a two-week cruise to the area, scientists say that the suspected cracks are a system of large depressions along the shelf edge that appear to have been excavated by gas erupting through the seafloor.

In a paper published in the journal, *Geology*, Neal Driscoll of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) and colleagues Jeffrey Weissel of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, and John Goff of the University of Texas Institute for Geophysics had speculated that rising gas might play a part in triggering shelf-edge collapse. However, they were still surprised at the quantity of gas and the apparent vigor of the "blowout" process.

The three scientists say that more work is needed before any definitive statements can be made. But it is apparent that gas charging plays a critical role in the area, and that the ongoing process of blowouts could conceivably weaken the shelf edge and contribute to a submarine landslide/tsunami scenario.

The scientists say the features, some as large as 1,500 meters (4,920 feet) across, 50 meters (165 feet deep) and up to 5,000 meters (16,400 feet) long, occur in a line along the shelf edge. That suggests that there is some geological mechanism at work underneath the features. A submarine landslide and resulting tsunami along the shelf, although a very low risk when compared to the chance of hurricanes and severe storms striking the area, remains possible.

Additional work will take a closer look into the subsurface to determine what is happening at depth. Collecting more samples of the sediments involved to determine age and timing is important, as is determining the origin of the gas and whether the venting process supports any specialized biological activity.



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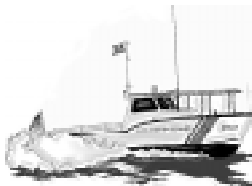
The *Marine Safety Newsletter* is published by the USCG Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Directorate to collect and disseminate information of general interest to the maritime community. The monthly newsletter prints abstracts of major USCG rulemakings, studies, special projects, and related events. Articles from non-Coast Guard sources may not represent USCG policy or views.

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www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/gmhome.htm

July 2000



CG Proposes to Raise Threshold of Property Damage for Reports

The Coast Guard proposes to raise the threshold of property damage for reports of accidents involving recreational vessels to \$2,000 for the Calendar Year of 2001.

The Coast Guard has modified the methodology used to achieve the threshold, to better account for the rising cost of repairs on recreational vessels.

This higher threshold should reduce the number of accident reports for minor or cosmetic damage, help to maintain statistics for future years comparable to those of past years, and reduce the paperwork burden on the public to report such incidents.

Identify your comments and related material by the docket number for this rulemaking USCG-1999-6094. Mail comments to Docket Management, U.S. Dept. of Transportation, room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street SW, Washington, DC 20590-0001, Fax: (202) 493-2251, Web site: <http://dms.dot.gov>

Questions pertaining to this rule should be addressed to Bruce Schmidt, Project Manager, Office of Boating Safety, Program Management Division, Coast Guard, Tel.: (202) 267-0955, e-mail: bschmidt@comdt.uscg.mil

Comments must reach the Docket Management Facility on or before October 18, 2000.

CG is Bringing Ports Together

According to a federal government report, a wave of shipping is expected to roll into U.S. ports within the next 20 years, as much as doubling the current volume of cargo.

To help ease the burden on already-crowded ports, the U.S. Coast Guard has set up seven meetings across the country.

The public meetings will show shippers, port workers and others in the maritime industry what kind of progress federal agencies have made in trying to deal with a 1999 report from Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater. The study predicts the amount of cargo to double by 2020, and also states that dockings at U.S. ports will grow by 65 percent, to roughly 130 million dockings a year.

For more information, call Lt. Bill Weinbecker at (904) 232-2640, extension 131.

MERPAC Charter Renewed

The Secretary of Transportation has renewed the charter for the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC) to remain in effect for a period of two years from May 20, 2000 until May 20, 2002.

MERPAC is a federal advisory committee that advises the Coast Guard on matters relating to training, qualification, licensing, certification and fitness of seamen serving in the U.S. Merchant Marine.

The charter is available on MERPAC's Web site at: www.uscg.mil/hg/g-m/advisory/merpac/merpac.htm

For further information contact Lieutenant Commander Luke B. Harden, Acting Executive Director, or Mr. Mark C. Gould, Assistant to the Executive Director, Commandant (G-MSO-1), U.S. Coast Guard, 2100 Second Street SW, Washington, DC 20593-0001, Tel.: (202) 267-0229.

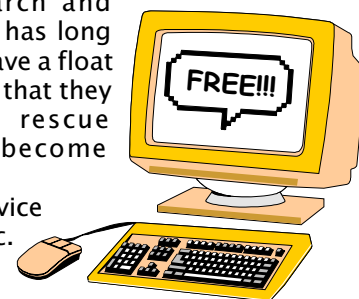
FloatPlanPlus Launches Free Online Service

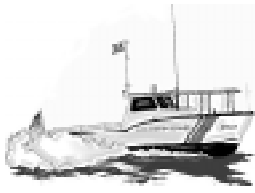
The United States Coast Guard conducts approximately 40,000 search and rescue operations a year and has long recommended that boaters leave a float plan with friends or family, so that they can notify search and rescue organizations if boaters become overdue.

Now a free Web-based service for boaters from ZARCOR, Inc. announced FloatPlanPlus(TM) which combines the best features of traditional float plans with new features such as automatic notification of a designated contact if the boater is overdue.

Boaters can file their cruising plans on-line in seconds, secure in the knowledge that their boating profile and itinerary will be available (on a 24-7 basis) to the appropriate search and rescue organization(s) in case of an emergency.

For full and complete information and instruction visit the Web site: www.zarcor.com/fpp/home.htm.





International Commission on Shipping to Visit the U.S.

The International Commission on Shipping (ICONS) will be visiting the United States from September 11-17 and plans to hold public consultative meetings in Washington & Miami.

The Commission, established in 1999, was mandated to investigate the continuing problem of substandard shipping and the associated abuse of crewmembers, including those employed on cruise vessels, and to prepare a report containing recommendations that could lead to its eventual eradication. The report will be delivered during the APEC Quality Shipping Seminar, scheduled for Sydney, Australia from April 5-7, 2001.

ICONS consists of four Commissioners, Mr. James Bell (United Kingdom), Professor Moritaka Hayashi (Japan), Captain Barry McKay (Canada) and is chaired by The Hon. Peter Morris, former Minister of Transport of Australia, who was largely responsible for the "Ships of Shame" reports.

The Commission is currently soliciting worldwide input from all segments of the maritime industry including politicians, government agencies, registries, owners, insurers, charterers, unions and trade associations, social/welfare agencies, environmental protection agencies, NGOs and maritime training establishments.

Prior to visiting the United States, the Commission will be also be holding consultative meetings in major Far East countries with further meetings scheduled for Europe and Africa later in the year.

The tanker "Erika" disaster, and the sinking of the bulk-carrier "Leader L", have again highlighted the dangers and risks associated with the operation of substandard ships, and the Commission's work will provide a timely focus for identifying the means to rid the seas of substandard shipping.

The Commission would welcome comments from individuals and organizations within the United States addressing both their past experiences with substandard vessels and measures to help resolve the situation. Those interested in participating in the ICONS process and meeting with the Commission, are invited to visit the ICONS' Web-site: www.icons.org.au/, where they will find background information, together with guidelines for submissions.

The preferred deadline for U.S. submissions is July 31, 2000.

Global Warming Could Cause Water Levels to Drop Significantly



Global warming could cause water levels in the Great Lakes to plunge by 3 to 8 feet during the next century – a decline that would disrupt commerce, expose toxic sediments and affect drinking water intakes and sewage discharges.

Some of the changes could occur within a generation.

Lake Michigan could drop more than 2 feet by 2030 – and as much as 5 feet by 2090 – according to Frank Quinn, the lead author of the Great Lakes regional assessment of climate change conducted by the U.S. government. The full report is to be presented to Congress; a Great Lakes overview was released this week.

The report spells out other concerns, including:

- A general warming of the region by 3.6 to 7.2 degrees, leading to accelerated evaporation in the lakes. But an increase in precipitation by 25% also is projected.
- A 50% reduction in wetlands.
- A 50% to 70% reduction in broadleaf and conifer forests in the region.
- Dramatic declines in migratory birds, including a 67% decline in wood warbler species in Wisconsin.

Texas Announces New Oil Spill Penalties

Land Commissioner David Dewhurst announced revised penalty guidelines for oil spills in Texas coastal waters. Beginning August 1, 2000 spills less than a gallon will draw fines of \$250. Larger spills will draw fines up to \$500 plus \$250 per barrel of oil spilled. Penalties for failure to report a spill will range from \$500 to \$25,000 per day.

The new guidelines were developed by a task force made up of industry representatives, environmental groups, and GLO staff.

The new scheme also includes incentives. Companies with a "Sound Management Practice Program" will receive reduced assessments when spills occur. Under Texas law, oil spills in Texas coastal waters must be reported to the General Land Office. Federal law requires reporting maritime spills to the Coast Guard.

The new guidelines are posted on the Land Office web site: www.glo.state.tx.us/oilspill, as well as in the June 23, 2000 edition of the Texas Register at <http://lamb.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/>.



GESAMP Has Own Web Site

The Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) now has its own web site, containing important scientific reports on various aspects. It is located at: <http://gesamp.imo.org/> and can also be accessed from IMO's homepage at: www.imo.org/.

GESAMP was established in 1967 by a number of United Nations Agencies, including IMO, which acts as the Group's secretariat.

Its purpose was to provide advice to the agencies and, through them their Member Governments on a problem that was just beginning to be recognized as a major threat. Since then the Joint Group has met regularly and in 1993 its role was extended to cover all scientific aspects on the prevention, reduction and control of the degradation of the marine environment to sustain life support systems, resources and amenities.

World Maritime Day

Every year IMO celebrates World Maritime Day. The exact date is left to individual Governments but is usually celebrated during the last week in September.

The day is used to focus attention on the importance of shipping safety and the marine environment and to emphasize a particular aspect of IMO's work.

To mark the occasion, the Secretary-General of IMO always prepares a special message and this is backed up by a paper which discusses the selected subject in greater depth. The messages and papers from the last three years can be found at: www.imo.org/imo/wmd/intro.htm

Institute Updates IMO Report

The Transportation Institute has recently updated a report it initially prepared in 1993 on the IMO.

The report is intended to present a cohesive and complete picture of the IMO and its significance to the international shipping community and U.S. – flag vessel operators.

The overview describes the IMO's composition, organization and deliberation procedures, summarizes the various international conventions, and identifies signatory nations. It also highlights those areas expected to attract international discussions in the coming years. Call the Transportation Institute for a copy of the report at: (301) 423-3335, (202) 347-2590, or (206) 443-1738.

UPCOMING IMO MEETINGS

July 10-14

September 11-15

September 18-22

Sub-committee on Safety of Navigation (NAV)—46th session

Sub-committee on Stability and Load Lines and on Fishing Vessels Safety (SLF)—43rd session

Twenty-Second Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Convention 1972

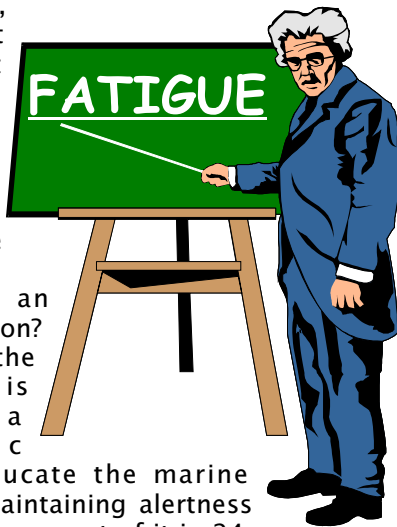
Fatigue: Education and Awareness

Fatigue continues to be a concern in 24-hour operations. The issue has gained significant attention in the marine industry as the result of accidents caused by tired watchstanders on EXXON VALDEZ and HERALD OF FREE ENTERPRISE.

The human body is simply not designed to remain alert and work throughout the night and unfortunately, work does not cease just so that people can have restorative sleep (composed of duration, continuity, quality, and time of day).

Is this an impossible situation? Not at all, and the Coast Guard is developing a systematic approach to educate the marine community on maintaining alertness and effective management of it in 24-hour operations.

The Human Element and Ship Design Division (G-MSE-1) at Coast Guard Headquarters, as a knowledgeable source of information and expertise on the subject of fatigue, is acting as the central point of communication for all ongoing and future efforts to address fatigue in the M community.



RADM Robert North, Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection, is committed to ensuring that the M field and industry have the information and knowledge to reasonably address the issue of fatigue. He will soon launch a "Crew Alertness Campaign" to educate the maritime community and increase awareness of fatigue in maritime operations.

This non-regulatory effort, spearheaded by G-MSE-1, will provide the M community with a coordination point for all fatigue and alertness related efforts. The campaign will provide information, resources, consultation, and references that will focus on all elements of fatigue.

Included in the campaign will be materials explaining loss of alertness and its dangerous affects, tips on how to effectively manage fatigue, findings from studies performed with marine industry personnel, and much more.

Loss of alertness caused by fatigue is a dangerous and complex issue but it can be effectively managed. Through an increased awareness and education campaign, the Coast Guard is beginning to better promote existing efforts while furthering future ones.

For more information, contact the Human Element and Ship Design Division at (202) 267-2997.

PRINCIPLES

- Take a Quality Approach
- Honor the Mariner
- Seek Non-Regulatory Solutions
- Share Commitment
- Manage Risk

VISION

To achieve the world's safest, most environmentally sound and cost-effective marine operations by emphasizing the role of people in preventing casualties and pollution.

GOALS

- Know More
- Train More
- Do More
- Offer More
- Cooperate More

Contact us directly with your PTP story:

Commandant (G-MSE-1), U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, 2100 Second Street, SW, Washington, DC 20593-0001; (202) 267-2997; (202) 267-4816 FAX; e-mail: fldr-he@comdt.uscg.mil

Contributions

Marine Safety Newsletter and *Proceedings* magazine welcome manuscript and photo submissions for publication. No payment can be made for manuscripts or photos submitted for publication. However, an author or photo credit byline will be given. The Editor reserves the right to make any editorial changes in manuscripts, which he believes will improve the material without altering the intended meaning. All correspondence should be addressed to: Editor, U.S. Coast Guard, National Maritime Center, 4200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 510, Arlington, VA 22203-1804.

Deadlines

- The Marine Safety Newsletter is published monthly on the 5th of each month.
- The deadline for articles, calendar events, and regulatory information is on the 25th of the previous month.
- Readers receive their copy of the *Marine Safety Newsletter* around the 15th of each month.

Up to the Minute News

Items missing the deadline for the *Marine Safety Newsletter* are posted on the World Wide Web at:

www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/gmhome.htm.

Address Changes

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